

Report

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Report to:	Housing and Technical Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	13 July 2011
Report by:	Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

Subject:	Annual Report on the Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2010/2011
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ◆ provide an overview of the progress made against the Resource Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2010/2011.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the progress made and priorities for 2011/2012 in relation to mainstreaming equality and diversity be noted.

3. Background

3.1. The previous update report to Housing and Technical Resources Committee gave a commitment to provide a further update at the end of the financial year 2010/2011.

3.2. The Resource has a well-established Equality and Diversity Co-ordinating Group with representation from each of the three service areas (Area, Property and Support) and the Joint Trades Unions. The group's primary role is to co-ordinate and monitor the Equality and Diversity Action Plan. The group also provides a strategic overview of equalities issues and supports a consistent approach to mainstreaming equality.

3.3. This report outlines the progress made in meeting these commitments and mainstreaming equality in 2010/2011 and sets out the key priority in 2011/2012.

4. Key achievements in 2010/2011

4.1. Scottish Housing Regulator Inspection

4.1.1. Our approach to mainstreaming equalities was assessed as part of the Scottish Housing Regulator inspection in 2010. The SHR found that the Resource's approach and its awareness of areas for future work, were strong. The report also recognises that the action plan has SMART objectives and that the Resource is a key participant in the Council's corporate approach. A small number of improvements relating to Allocations and Homelessness were recommended and have been included in service improvement plans.

4.2. Staff Training and Development

- 4.2.1. Following an extensive formal training programme in 2009/2010 in which a total of 2,113 Housing and Technical Resources employees participated in a range of Equalities training, the focus in 2010/2011 has been on reinforcing key messages via Service Development Sessions, Core and Local Briefs and Toolbox Talks. 173 members of Housing and Technical Resources staff have also attended formal training courses which have an equality and diversity aspect.
- 4.2.2. A consolidated list of staff trained in British Sign Language training has been prepared and at least one member of staff identified in each office to provide support to colleagues when dealing with customers who use BSL. A programme of refresher training has been established.

4.3. Access to Information and Services

- 4.3.1. Translation and Interpretation Guidance has now been prepared. Staff will be made aware of the guidance via a training session to be held by 30 July 2011.

4.4. Physical Access

- 4.4.1. Housing and Technical Resources public locations continue to have a compliance rate of 100% with the Statutory Performance Indicator for Access, which includes 33% of services being provided in an alternative way. Housing and Technical Resources, through Property Services, has overall responsibility for physical access across the Council. A number of facilities have been opened or refurbished this year to a high specification, including accessibility standards, such as David Walker House, Biggar Corn Exchange and schools involved in the ongoing Primary Schools Modernisation Programme.
 - 4.4.2. Property Services are also represented at the meetings of the South Lanarkshire Access Panel, which discuss issues and improvements to building designs to enhance access. This forum also looks at planning applications, and along with colleagues from Building Control, assists members of the Access panel in identifying potential issues with proposed designs of public and commercial buildings.
 - 4.4.3. Phase 2 of the Disability Discrimination Act compliance works has been completed in relation to Sheltered Housing complexes. Improvements have been made at 18 complexes in 2010/2011 including installation of automatic doors/entry systems, dropped kerbs and installing ramps and hand rails.
- #### 4.5. Mystery shopping exercise with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel
- 4.5.1. The Resource has worked with the South Lanarkshire Access Panel to develop a mystery shopping exercise to assess how well our services meet and respond to the needs of disabled people visiting our Q and A offices.
 - 4.5.2. Overall feedback from the visits is very positive, particularly in relation to the helpfulness of staff and physical access inside the Q and A offices, with 7 of 8 offices receiving an excellent rating for these elements.
 - 4.5.3. A small number of potential improvements were also identified, primarily regarding disabled toilets, parking and signage. An action plan has been prepared to consider and address these issues.
 - 4.5.4. The results from the mystery shopping exercise were considered in the evidence bank which helped Q and A to retain the Customer Services Excellence Award in its recent assessment.

4.6. Improvements in data collection and monitoring arrangements

4.6.1. Equality monitoring profiles of service users have been updated, to establish trends in relation to who is using our services and ensure that they are accessible to equality groups.

4.7. Equality Impact Assessments

4.7.1. Equality Impact Assessments is a tool which helps public authorities to meet the requirements of equalities legislation and ensure that policies and practices do not disproportionately impact on any equality group; 19 impact assessments were completed and published in 2010/2011.

4.8. Consultation and Participation

4.8.1. The Resource has continued to mainstream equality considerations into standard consultation on major policy and service areas to improve its understanding of customer needs and ensure they are reflected in our policies and practice.

4.8.2. The Disability Partnership Housing Sub Group has contributed to key policy reviews and consultations including:-

- ◆ Review of the Repairs Policy
- ◆ Review of the Guide to Repairs
- ◆ Tenant Participation Strategy

4.8.3. The 2nd annual consultation event was held with residents of Swinhill Gypsy and Traveller site in November 2010. The event was again well attended and provided the opportunity for residents to express their views on our services, including:-

- ◆ Progress made on items discussed at the previous consultation event
- ◆ Site investment
- ◆ Ongoing participation and consultation
- ◆ The budget and rent setting process

4.8.4. A key priority for residents was the upgrade of kitchen facilities within the amenity blocks at the Swinhill site, which has subsequently been approved for the final year of the Home Happening programme.

5. Priorities for 2011/2012

5.1. A draft Equality and Diversity Action Plan has been prepared for 2011/2012. Key areas for action are listed below.

5.2. Implementing the Equality Act 2010

5.2.1. The Equality Act came into force in April 2011. A self assessment checklist has been developed to help assess our readiness to meet the duties required by the Act and identify any further action required.

5.3. Consultation and Engagement

5.3.1. Work will continue with the South Lanarkshire Tenant Development Support Project to develop a consultation event to increase our understanding of the needs and experiences of tenants from a minority ethnic background and encourage ongoing involvement in tenant participation structures.

5.3.2. Annual consultation events will again be offered and arranged with residents of the Gypsies and Travellers site at Swinhill and Springbank, by November 2011.

5.4. Access to Information and Services

5.4.1. The Mystery shopping action plan will be progressed and an update report to the Access Panel and ASMT prepared by November 2011.

5.4.2. Phase three of the Disability Discrimination Act compliance and improvement works at sheltered housing complexes will be undertaken in 2011/12. The Primary Schools Modernisation Programme will also continue, along with major new builds such as the state of the art Stonehouse Integrated Community Facility.

5.5. Equality Impact Assessment

5.5.1. A schedule of impact assessments will be undertaken as required in relation to policy and service reviews and budget savings.

5.6. Training and Development

5.6.1. A range of training sessions and briefings on equalities will take place throughout 2011/12 to continue to reinforce key equality messages and requirements and ensure staff are aware of their individual responsibilities.

6. Next Steps

6.1. Progress in relation to mainstreaming equality and the action plan will continue to be monitored by the E&D Co-ordinating Group. It is proposed to continue reporting progress to Committee on the Equality and Diversity Action Plan on an annual basis.

7. Employee Implications

7.1. None.

8. Financial Implications

8.1. None.

9. Other Implications

9.1. The risk associated with the contents of this report relate to the Council's requirement to implement Equalities legislation.

9.2. There are no sustainability issues relating to the contents of this report.

10. Equalities Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

10.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and, therefore, no impact assessment or consultation is required.

Lindsay Freeland

Executive Director (Housing and Technical Resources)

10 June 2011

Link(s) to Council Values/Improvement Themes/Objectives

◆ Improve the quality, access and availability of housing

Previous References

◆ Housing and Technical Resources Committee 30 June 2010

List of Background Papers

- ◆ Housing and Technical Resources Equality and Diversity Action Plan 2010/2011.

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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